

VZCZCXRO6251
PP RUEHAG RUEHAST RUEHDA RUEHDF RUEHFL RUEHIK RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHLN
RUEHLZ RUEHPOD RUEHROV RUEHSR RUEHVK RUEHYG
DE RUEHTH #0464/01 0871422
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 271422Z MAR 08
FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1548
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ATHENS 000464

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [NATO](#) [MK](#) [GR](#)
SUBJECT: GREECE/MACEDONIA: KARAMANLIS AND BAKOYANNIS
NEGATIVE IN PUBLIC ON LATEST NIMETZ PROPOSAL

REF: ATHENS 452

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED -- PROTECT ACCORDINGLY

SUMMARY

11. (U) Following the March 25 meetings hosted by UN Envoy Nimetz in New York on the Macedonia name issue, the Greek press trumpeted that the proposed international name was "Republic of Macedonia (Skopje)." Almost immediately, Greek officials publicly laid out concerns with the proposal, both the name itself and the scope of use, and reiterated Greece's intent to block a NATO invitation to Macedonia absent a mutually agreed solution. The Foreign Ministry posted a statement March 26 noting "distance" from a mutually agreed solution. FM Bakoyannis later publicly termed the proposal "far from our objectives." PM Karamanlis told the press that the proposal is insufficient. Although both Bakoyannis and Karamanlis reiterated these positions in Parliament today, both also emphasized that Greece continues to seek a negotiated solution and called for the Nimetz-led negotiations to continue. End Summary.

Karamanlis Addresses Parliamentary Caucus

12. (U) In a March 27 address to the ruling New Democracy Party's parliamentary caucus, now being widely repeated on Greek television and radio, PM Karamanlis suggested that Greece, in approaching the 17-year old "name problem," has taken some "brave and honest decisions" which, however, remained without real effect given the "intransigence" displayed by the other side. The Greek PM underlined that "we are still far from a mutually acceptable solution" and called for the continuation of the UN-sponsored talks ("a final resolution with the seal of the United Nations"). There can be no progress or "allied relations," Karamanlis added, when "logic that is not appropriate for a European country" dominates the negotiations. Greece won't accept "a pseudo-name as a solution" -- and without a solution to the name problem, the Greek PM concluded, "there can be no invitation (to Macedonia to join) NATO."

Bakoyannis Negative on Nimetz proposal

13. (U) FM Dora Bakoyannis also expressed concerns with the most recent Nimetz proposal during her March 27 speech before the parliamentary caucus. Bakoyannis indicated that the proposal "is too far from a mutually acceptable

solution" and, therefore, Greece will continue its efforts under UN auspices to find "a coherent, operational, applied solution" to the name issue. Bakoyannis said that Athens had already provided Nimetz with detailed points where Greece seeks clarification. Greece as the oldest member of NATO and the EU in the Balkans and the country with the strongest economy in the region, is not interested in "a solution for a solution's sake," feels "no angst at this particular time," and "needs no fig leaves" in the process of negotiations, but, rather, wants to focus on looking "to resolve the issue for good." In her speech at Parliament, Bakoyannis repeated what she had already told reporters on March 26: "(The Nimetz proposal) is a proposal far from Greece's objectives.... The Greek position is clear. If there is no mutually acceptable solution on the name, Greece cannot consent to a relationship of alliance with Skopje." Greece, the FM concluded in her parliamentary caucus speech, has "spoken straight" in stating its positions and "nobody can doubt that."

Government spokesmen

14. (U) On March 26, as news began to break of the most recent Nimetz proposal, spokesman George Koumoutsakos said in an MFA statement: "Mr. Nimetz has submitted another proposal. The proposal is being assessed. The initial conclusion is that we are far from a mutually acceptable solution. The effort is continuing." During a press briefing, Deputy GoG spokesman Evangelos Antonaros refused comment on the Nimetz proposal citing ongoing negotiations. Greece is at the table "in a constructive spirit and positive attitude," Antonaros said, adding that as long as talks continue, he will be refraining from any detailed

ATHENS 00000464 002 OF 002

comments pertaining to the name issue in the interest of Greek diplomacy's efforts. While it does appear that the spokesmen are making some effort at message discipline recently, several media contacts tell us that some Greek officials, speaking on background, are using the word "rejection" explicitly to describe their reaction to the Nimetz proposal.

Comment

15. (SBU) Amplifying these statements, the Greek media have portrayed, almost universally, the latest Nimetz proposal in negative terms. Some have gone so far as to use terms like U.S. "blackmail" or a "trap" for Greece set by the U.S. to describe the course of current diplomacy. This includes some major media outlets that had been airing supportive statements and commentary in the recent past. Meanwhile, polling data continue to indicate that a large majority of the Greek public is against a compromise solution on the name issue. Adding to FM Bakoyannis' challenges, the opposition leaders have requested briefings from the Government on the name issue, which -- under the Greek political system -- she is obligated to provide. We are hard pressed to find positive commentary on the most recent Nimetz proposal anywhere in the Greek public sphere. End Comment.

SPECKHARD